DUMBARTON OAKS
Georgetown
3101 R Street, Northwest
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-825
DC,GEO,234-

PHOTOGRAPHS

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FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DUMBARTON OAKS

HABS NO. DC-825

Location: 3101 R Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: Trustees for Harvard University

Present Occupant: Dumbarton Oaks/Trustees for Harvard University

Present Use: Research institution and collections

Significance: No other property combines mansion, collections, and gardens into such an aesthetically compelling early to mid-twentieth century vision of estate living in Georgetown. Starting with the Bliss's occupancy and continuing under Harvard's ownership, Dumbarton Oaks has been a site of internationally significant cultural and political events. In 1938, Nadia Boulanger conducted, in the music room, the world premier of Igor Stravinsky's Dumbarton Oaks Concerto, commissioned by Mrs. Bliss, and nine years later Stravinsky conducted his concerto at Dumbarton Oaks. Stravinsky and Boulanger were two of this century's most important musicians. In 1944, the planning sessions that led to the creation of the United Nations were held in the Dumbarton Oaks music room. Two of this century's most important architectural firms, McKim, Mead and White and Philip Johnson, have designed major spaces at Dumbarton Oaks. Furthermore, the present Georgian Revival house incorporates a Federal Period house dating to approximately 1800. In addition, several locally prominent and one nationally prominent man associated with the house in the nineteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1800 or 1801. On October 24, 1801, the Georgetown Corporation received a letter from William Hammond Dorsey informing the body that he was occupying his new house. He built the house on a 22 acre estate he had assembled from parcels bought in 1800 and 1801. A painting and photographs attributed to the 1860's by Walter Muir Whitehill show the south (main) facade of a five bay house with the central bay recessed. This bay had the main entrance with an arched window above. To the east of the main block was an attached, but setback, shorter two story wing with a large Federal Period fan-light door in the bay closest to the main block. In there nineteenth-century representations Dumbarton Oaks strongly resembles the south facade of the central block of the Bowie-Sevier House, 3124 Q St, NW (see HABS documentation, DC-60).

2.Original and subsequent owners:

1800 Indenture Liber E5 Folio 401-3. For 2,000 pounds sterling.
Thomas Beall
to
William Dorsey (7/12/1800).

1801 Deed Liber G7 Folio 250. For $100.00
Thomas Beall
to
William Hammond Dorothy (8/25/1801). He called the property the Oaks.

1805 Indenture Liber M 12 Folio 8-9. For $15,000
Dorsey
to
Robert Beverley (4/19/1805), who renamed the property the Acrolophos.

1805 Mortgage Liber N 13 Folio 44.
Beverley
to
Dorsey (7/1/1805)

1822 Indenture Liber WB 4 Folio 230-232.
Robert Beverley
to
James Bradshaw Beverley, his son, in consideration of "love and affection" (3/5/1822).

1823 Indenture Liber WB 7 Folio 441. For $10,000
James Bradshaw Beverley
to
James Edward Calhoun (4/1/1823). The actual purchaser was Calhoun's mother Floride Colhoun (spelling varied), the widow of a U.S. Senator from South Carolina.

1829 Deed Liber WB 28 Folio 68. For $8,000
James Edward Calhoun
to
Brooke Mackall (8/5/1829).

1846 Deed Liber WB 129 Folio 346. For $11,500
Brooke Mackall and wife
to

Edward Magruder Linthicum, who changed the name to "Monterey." (7/9/1846)

1890 Assignment Liber 1516 Folio 403-406.
Edward Linthicum Dent and Mary G.
to
Gordon and Tayloe, Trustees (9/26/1890).

1891 Deed Liber 1624 Folio 5. For $7,500
Gordon and Tayloe
to
Colonel Henry F. Blount, who named it the "Oaks."

1920 Deed Liber 4431 Folio 377.
Lucia E. Blount
to
Mr. and Mrs. Robert. Mrs. Blount continued to live in a building at the rear of the property until 1922. (10/15/l920) Robert Woods Bliss and Mildred Bliss renamed the property "Dumbarton Oaks."

1940 Deed Liber 7551 Folio 427-429.
Robert Woods Bliss and Mildred Bliss conveyed the house, gardens and collections to Harvard University (11/1/1940).

NOTE: The above chronology taken from "Selected History of Dumbarton Oaks" and other Dumbarton Oaks records prepared by James Carder, Ph.D., Manager of House Collections and Archives at Dumbarton Oaks, and from Walter Muir Whitehill's *Dumbarton Oaks : The History of a Georgetown House and Garden, 1800-1966,* ca. 19 67, Harvard College).

3. Builder: Original builder unknown.

4. Original plans and construction: As built by William Dorsey, the house is believed to have been a central hall plan with room(s) to either side. As pointed out by Paul Dolinsky, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey, such a plan, with either single or double rooms (i.e., front and back parlors) flanking the hall, would have been common to houses of the period. No visual representations, either drawings or paintings, nor any written description of the house as built by Dorsey in 1800/1801 exists. The late Walter Muir Whitehill, the distinguished director of the Boston Athenaeum and author of *A Topographical History of Boston*, who was commissioned by Mrs. Bliss to write the history of Dumbarton Oaks apparently concluded that Dorsey's house was a center hall plan because of William Gordon's description, quoted below.

5. Alterations and additions: The earliest known documentation, a painting and a photograph, attributed by Walter Muir Whitehill to the 1860s, shows an attached, recessed, lower wing to the east of the main block. The wing's prominent Federal Period doorway suggests

that the wing was either built at the same time as the main block or more likely - given the exaggerated scale of the doorway sometime later, but before the Civil War. As discussed below, Whitehill also concluded that the wing was built before the Civil War - but just before. A Federal Period doorway, however, just before the Civil War seems surprisingly late even for the South.

Whitehill was not the first scholar retained by the Blisses to write a history of Dumbarton Oaks, and he drew heavily on the findings of his predecessors. One of them was architectural historian James Grate Van Derpoel of Columbia University who argued that the second owner of the estate, Robert Beverley, built the free-standing orangery (greenhouse), which is east of the original building. Van Derpoel dated the orangery as between 1805 and 1812, based on stylistic evidence. Beverley's brother-in-law, Colonel Edward Lloyd, also had an orangery at his Maryland estate, Wye House, and Whitehill and Van Derpoel argued that this coincidence and supposed similarity between the two orangeries reinforced the contention that Beverley, rather than Dorsey, built it. (Giles Constable in Apollo spelt the architectural historian's name "Vander Poel".)

Van Derpoel worked with another scholar, Meredith B. Colkert, Jr., who thought the orangery was built much later. In his unpublished typescript, he wrote that the structure was not built by the second owner, but by the fifth owner. "To assist him in developing his gardens, Edward Linthicum built to the east of the House and probably before the Civil War, a magnificent greenhouse...The greenhouse, now renamed the orangery, has changed very little since the days that Linthicum enjoyed it. Of all the structures at Dumbarton Oaks, it is the least changed " (page 6-VI; typescript in Dumbarton Oaks archives).

As the author of the first published and longest monograph on Dumbarton Oaks and as a distinguished scholar, Walter Muir Whitehill's writings on Dumbarton Oaks carry great weight, even if his book is based on original research done by others. Therefore, the orangery can be viewed as the first addition to the Oaks, carried out by the second owner, and the main block's wing is later, although how much latter can be debated.

Whitehill's chronology of the nineteenth-century additions to the house is premised on the view that the first four owners of the house lacked the financial resources to carry out the major alterations and additions visible in the painting and photographs he dates to the 1860s. "Previous owners had been chiefly concerned with keeping the house from falling to pieces. Linthicum, by contrast, greatly enlarged it and radically changed its appearance to make his prosperity clear." (page 49)

According to Whitehill, Linthicum who purchased the property in 1846 and lived there until his death in 1869, added the wings to the east and west of the main block, added the rear (east-west) corridor running perpendicular to the original main hall, added the mansard roof, added the taller, mansarded tower at the rear (north) facade of the building, and enlarged the entrance and built a wrought iron porch. He also raised the roof on the orangery. All of these

alterations, except for the corridor, are visible on the photographs, labeled as late nineteenth century or about 1890, reproduced in Whitehill's monograph. His fourth visual reference (also included in the book) is a painting of the adopted daughter of the Linthicum's, who, according to Whitehill, was married at the Oaks, shortly before the Civil War. Whitehill reasonably assumed that the east wing (with a projecting rear section) was built at this time. "The enlargement of the house was probably undertaken about this time to provide quarters for the newly married couple, who moved in with the Linthicums." (page 51) (This painting of the daughter was presumably done before 1862, when she died. The paintings caption states that it shows "...The Oaks in the background, before Linthicum alterations." But since the east wing is clearly visible in the painting, a typographical error was made in the caption or Mr. Whitehill was unsure of his presumed chronology.)

In addition to the four graphic representations of the Oaks, Whitehill relied on William A Gordon, Jr., a Linthicum friend. Whitehill reprinted a few sentences of Gordon's description of the house when Linthicum owned it. "The house, which has been changed, but not improved in appearance, by the addition of a mansard roof and other alterations, was a large two-story brick, with hall from front to rear 'wide enough for a hay wagon to pass through, on either side of which were-great parlors beautifully proportioned." (page 50) Whitehill provided no source for the quotation, but he obviously-drew on the March 17, 1914 speech of Gordon's before the Columbia Historical Society (now, the Historical Society of Washington). His remarks were published the next year by the Society. In the first sentence by Gordon, Whitehill dropped the key closing phrase "covering with the hall the entire ground floor". In addition, Whitehill did not acknowledge that Gordon's recollections were made 50 years after the presumed date of Linthicum's alterations, raising questions about the accuracy of Gordon's remembrances.

After Linthicum's ownership, the house was bought by Colonel and Mrs. Henry Blount who added a 200 seat auditorium in the attic. In his monograph, Whitehill quoted Blount children and other family records for his description of the house. Years after the publication of Whitehill's book, a grandson of the Blounts published a family history which includes description, floorplans and photographs of the house, both the interior and the exterior. This material, which was probably available to Whitehill reinforces his discussion of the house as it was during the Blount ownership.

The most extensive, most significant, and best documented alterations occurred during the Bliss ownership. In the 1920s, the Blisses's architect F.H. Brooks removed most of the late nineteenth-century changes and recreated Dumbarton Oaks as a Federal Period House, although not as it looked originally or at least not as it looked in the early photographs. After Brooke, the New York architectural firm of McRim, Mead and White designed the music room, arguably the estate's single most important room, and several other spaces and buildings. Later, the Blisses worked with Thomas Waterman to design other of the museum spaces, and then in the 1960s Philip Johnson's Pre-Columbian Gallery and Wyeth and Ring's Garden Library Wing were added. Mrs. Bliss with Beatrix Jones Farrand and later Ruth Havey in designing the extensive gardens. Part II architectural information further describes Dumbarton Oaks as transformed by

the Blisses. In two sentences, Whitehill elegantly summed up the their importance to the appearance of Dumbarton Oaks: "The Dumbarton Oaks house, as one sees it today, is essentially the creation of Mr. and Mrs. Bliss in the nineteen twenties and thirties, always in reference to the fine Federalist shell of the 1800 building. Similarly the gardens represent the skill of Mrs. Farrand and Mrs. Bliss in constructing an enchanting landscape out of magnificent existing trees that grew on slopes so varied and in places so steep as to present a great challenge in design." (page 63)

B. Historical Context:

When William Dorsey, a lawyer, real estate speculator, and local politician, purchased 22 acres and built his house atop the heights of Georgetown, he had mostly likely picked the most desirable site in Georgetown. The location (actually outside of the legal boundaries of town) offered a commanding view of Georgetown, its houses, warehouses, piers, and the Potomac River. Conversely, its prominent location along Back Street (now R Street) assured that Dorsey's house would be highly visible, letting everyone know that he was a successful and wealthy resident of Georgetown.

Dorsey's estate had originally been part of the much larger, early eighteenth-century land grant known as Rock of Dumbarton (also spelt Dunbarton), which Thomas Beall of George slowly sold off, creating much of the parcels that are upper Georgetown.

By the year 1800, Georgetown was already starting to decline as a port and its citizens were making their wealth in real estate speculation as well as trade, according to historian Constance M. Green, Dorsey (1764-1819)started speculating in Georgetown real estate even earlier, in 1793, buying lots near the Potomac River and he continued buying real estate, first near the harbor but later farther north, until 1806 when he bought the Washington Bowie estate (see Bowie-Sevier HABS history). He also speculated on land in Washington, D.C. on behalf of investors and for himself.

Dorsey's prominence in Georgetown was reflected in his public and private positions: Recorder of the Georgetown Corporation, member of its Common Council, and a judge.

As befitted a prominent real estate speculator, Dorsey's house was distinctive and monumental as described by Walter Muir Whitehill:

> The distinguishing features were slightly receding central bay for the entrance, and countersunk panels of stone between the horizontal rows of twelve-pane windows. Similar countersunk panels, not unlike some used by Charles Bulfinch in Boston about that time, are to be seen on the nearby house at 3339 N Street. One can only guess at the form of the entrance and -shape of the roof, for the earliest -- surviving view is a photograph taken in the eighteen sixties, which shows a building that already had been considerably modified. Inside was a

> spacious central hall, running through the house, separating two large drawing rooms, each with its fireplace. (p.15)

Dorsey's initial financial successes, which enabled him to buy the land and build the house, did not last. He was forced to sell the house and move back-to Maryland.

In 1805, Dorsey sold the estate to Robert Beverley. Beverley bought the property with his mother's money and, in return, he agreed she could live there with him. Beverley lived at the estate only slightly longer than Dorsey as Beverley returned to Blandfield, the family's Virginia estate at the start of the War of 1812. In 1816, his mother moved to another house in Georgetown and only his children occasionally occupied the house. According to Whitehill, who had access to the Beverley family papers at the Virginia Historical Society, the house was a tremendous financial drain and Robert Beverley tried unsuccessfully to sell or rent it. His son, James Bradshaw Beverley, to whom the house was given, only succeeded in selling it at the end of 1822. Prior to the sale, both James Beverley and his sister and her husband had lived at the house, known as Acrolophos, and later Beverley lived there with his new wife. It seems highly plausible that the wing with the Federal Period doorway could have been added during the Beverley ownership, to meet the needs of the various newlyweds who moved in. If it had been built then, presumably it would have been mentioned in the Beverley papers and discovered by Whitehill. Since it is not mentioned by Whitehill and he attributes the wing to a later owner, it is assumed that the Beverley papers do not mention any additions.

Beverley sold the estate to James Edward Calhoun, but according to Whitehill the actual purchaser was Calhoun's mother, Floride Calhoun (an alternative spelling). But it was her son-in-law, John C. Calhoun who was the house's most important, and only nationally significant occupant. John C. Calhoun, was secretary of war, had previously been a congressman, and would later be vice president. He also owned a house at 6th and E Streets, N.W., and he split the year between the two residences. Most notably, Calhoun entertained General Layette on his 1824 visit to the United States at both of his residences. Despite such prominent associations and Calhoun's elevated political position, the estate proved too expensive for Calhoun, just as it had for Beverley. Calhoun rented the house and then finally sold it in 1829 to Brooke Mackall.

Mackall was a Georgetown native and the son of a successful merchant. Mackall's career as an a government bureaucrat was less financially remunerative. In 1846, three years after his father's death, he sold his Georgetown estate, apparently unable to afford it solely on his salary. (See HABS Reports DC-835 and DC-164 for other Mackall properties in Georgetown.)

The new owner, Georgetown merchant Edward Magruder Linthicum was the first owner who could afford to maintain and enlarge the property. As stated earlier, Walter Muir Whitehill believed the east wing was built by Linthicum to provide quarters for his newly married daughter, Katherine, and her husband, Josiah Dent. The husband and their son continued to live there after Katherine' s death in 1862, Linthicum's death in 1869, and his widow's death in 1884. Six years later, the grandson, Edward Linthicum Dent, a failed entrepreneur, was forced to sell to

estate to pay his debts.

In the absence of written records, contemporaneous descriptions, or definitively dated photographs, it is reasonable to question the nineteenth-century building chronology, specifically concerning the Linthicum changes, that Whitehill described for Dumbarton Oaks. For example, the east wing appears earlier than Whitehill thought and the mansard treatment seems later than he dated it. But in 1889, Mary S. Lockwood's *Historic Homes in Washington: Its Noted Men and Women* was published. opposite page 288 a small photograph shows the house with Mansard roof and Mansard tower. That book was published a year before Colonel and Mrs. Blount bought the estate from the trustees of Edward Linthicum Dent, proving Whitehill right in attributing the major alterations to Linthicum.

As the trustees for Dent, Gordon and Tayloe, had divided the 22 acre property into several parcels, Blount was able to buy only the house and surrounding six acres. He subsequently acquired additional land, but not as much as held by his predecessors.

Also unlike all of the previous owners, he was not from either Georgetown or Montgomery County, Maryland. He made his money in manufacturing farm equipment in Evansville, Indiana and after retiring in 1886, his family traveled in Europe for two years, then settled in Washington. The acquisition of a Georgetown mansion by wealthy people without Washington roots would again occur at this property and neighboring estates. Mr. Blount became quite active in a number of Washington financial, social, and educational institutions, including the National Geographical Society. Mrs. Blount was a charter member and later Secretary General of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Blounts made extensive changes on the interior of the house, most notably the theater in the attic.

Whitehill, as usual, best summed up the early history of the house:

> When James E. Calhoun sold Oakley in 1829, the house had been through a variety of vicissitudes unusual for a handsome place under thirty years old. Dorsey, its builder, enjoyed if for less than four years before his Washington real estate speculations caught up with him. Then for seven years the Virginia Beverleys maintained it properly, and for ten more struggled to keep the roof tight and prevent the plaster from falling. With the South Carolina Calhouns, it changed from an asset to a liability in only six years; moreover they had never regarded it as anything more than a cool summer house, to be rented in winters if possible. For the next forty years the place was to be the year-round home of two very different permanent residents of Georgetown: a customs officer and a retail hardware dealer. (p. 47)

Whitehill went on to write that "previous owners had been chiefly concerned with keeping the house from falling to pieces. Linthicum, by contrast, greatly enlarged it and radically changed its appearance to make his prosperity clear." (p. 49)

Linthicum's changes, as well as those of the Blounts' and all other owners pale in comparison with those undertaken by the Blisses who bought the bulk of the property from Mrs. Blount in 1920 and the remainder in 1922. Robert Wood Bliss and his wife Mildred Barnes Bliss had the resources and sophistication to make Dumbarton Oaks into not simply a Georgetown estate, but one of international renown. Denys Sutton, editor of Apollo wrote: "The Blisses were of a type that has more or less vanished- the civilized amateur- and represented American patrician culture at its finest... The taste of the Blisses, Maecenases of distinction, was for the rare and unusual... Dumbarton Oaks... is an oasis of culture where the inanimate beauty of the objects within is complemented by the growing beauty of the gardens without." (page 2, Apollo)

It would be hard to overstate the involvement of the Blisses, especially Mrs. Bliss, in the design of the additions and the gardens. In fact, they were so active in the design of the museum wings that they, along with Waterman, signed the drawings, according to James Carder, manager, Dumbarton Oaks house collection and archives. Most interesting is that the Blisses were actively involved although they were living abroad during much of the time the early work was being done. As Robert Bliss was a diplomat, he and his wife lived in Sweden from 1923 to 1927 and in Argentina from 1927 to 1933 when he retired from the foreign service. So, much of the Bliss involvement in the design of the gardens and the McKim, Mead and White projects were "done" by overseas correspondence. The Blisses, who married in 1908, only lived at Dumbarton Oaks from 1933-1940 when they conveyed the property to Harvard, his alma mater. Although they were in Washington, D.C., from 1920-1923 they lived at Massachusetts Avenue near Dupont Circle. In all likelihood, the Blisses did not want to live at Dumbarton Oaks until the major work by Frederick Brooke to the main block of the house was done. After conveying the house, the Blisses lived in Santa Barbara at Mrs. Bliss's mothers estate until 1942. From 1942 until 1969 when Mrs. Bliss died, they lived at 28th and Q Streets, a few blocks from Dumbarton Oaks. (Mr. Bliss died in 1962.) They do not appear to have had any children.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: As seen from the south, Dumbarton Oaks appears as a five-part Georgian Revival house, with wings and a greenhouse. The rear facade of Dumbarton Oaks is not as elaborate, but still suggests late eighteenth/early nineteenth century American architecture. The house dominates an approximately 16 acre site along the height of Georgetown, facing south on R Street from 32nd Street to Montrose Park, a National Park Service site given by the Blisses. The R Street perimeter has a high brick wall with elaborate wrought-iron gates. The 32nd Street side also has a tall brick wall and Federal Revival buildings and pavilions, including the main entrance to the property. At the intersection of 32nd and S Streets, other buildings, from the 1930's, belonging to Dumbarton Oaks can be viewed as well as its buildings along S Street. These brick buildings are vaguely British cottage style while the other buildings north of the main house and visible from the corner of 32nd and S Streets are Federal Revival.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: Dumbarton Oaks is a U-shaped, two story building with a tall attic, and basement; the concave side faces north, which is the rear facade. On the south facade, the main block is five bays wide with a large central entrance approached by a grand staircase. Set back one bay are wings to the east and west of the central block. These wings are three bays wide and consist of a one bay hyphen and a two bay end slightly projecting pavilion with a pedimented roof. The west bay is connected by a lower wing to the museum, garden library, and entrance wing of the complex. The east bay is connected by a lower wing to the one story orangery. To the-east of the orangery are paths to the extensive and varied gardens of Dumbarton Oaks which run primarily east of the house, but are also north of it.

On the north facade, the two end wings project to the north, flanking a curved central bay which is on-axis with the front entrance. The central bay houses a rear entrance approached by a concrete stairs and landing. Neither the main nor rear entrance are used.

Directly west of the main block, attached through the low wing is the 1940 wing housing the entrance and museum galleries. Directly south of that wing is the 1963 Garden Library, with its tall, bow window bays. Returning to the entrance wing, which opens on the north to the enclosed courtyard housing the Byzantine collection. Directly east of that courtyard is the 1929 music room, the most impressive room at Dumbarton Oaks. North of the entrance wing is a corridor leading to the 1963 Pre-Columbian Wing, which is quite different, but nearly as compelling as the music room. From the orangery at the east end of the house, to the Garden library wing at the southwest corner, to the Pre-Columbian wing on the north, all sections of the building form one continuous structure accessible by openings between adjacent sections, built at different times, or by passages built as connectors.

Frederick H. Brooke was the architect for the extensive renovations carried out from 1921 to 1925, which included removal of mid to late nineteenth-century alterations, adding rear wing at the west end, refacing the exterior, and moving the servant and kitchen wing from the east end of the house, in the ell, to the west end of the house. Also, the two sets of stairs in gallery were added, replacing a stairs that ran along the north wall of the gallery.

Lawrence White of McKim, Mead and White designed the music room, east wing bay, and numerous service buildings north of the house.

Thomas Waterman in the 1940s added the west wings, entrance, and perimeter wall that marked the conversion of Dumbarton Oaks from the Blisses' residence into a Harvard research and museum. James Carder, Manager of the House Collection and Archives at Dumbarton Oaks, noted that the Blisses unwell as Waterman signed the drawings for these 1940s additions and that the Blisses were listed as designers and Waterman as architect.

Philip Johnson designed the Pre-Columbian museum wing, which opened in 1963. The

same year, the Garden Library wing, designed by Wyeth and King, also of New York, opened.

Other alterations, primarily interior, have been carried out in the last 50 years and are described in detail in "Selected History of Dumbarton Oaks", prepared by James Carder (Dumbarton House Collection and Archives).

2. Foundations: On the south facade of the main block, the foundation appears to be large blocks of finished cut stone. Along the rest of the south facade and on the north (rear) facade, the brick wall runs below ground-level, obstructing the foundation. Inside the basement, the walls are finished in painted stucco or concrete so it is not possible to ascertain the foundation material.

3. Walls: The south facade is laid in Flemish bond, except for the orangery which is common bond. The north facade is also common bond with the exception of the central round bay which is in Flemish bond, with pronounced mortar joints. The in 1929 music room is executed in Flemish bond.

4. Structural system, framing: Structural system and framing are unknown, although Brooke's drawings for early 1920's renovation for the Blisses designate the walls as concrete.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies: At the front and rear entrances major stairs, which curve out at the bottom, lead up to wide landings. Stairs and landing appear to be made of concrete. Secondary stairs and landings are at the west end of the main block on the front and rear. Decorative balconies are in front of the first floor windows of the main block and on one second story window of the east and west wings in the bay closest to the main block.

6. Chimneys; The roof of the main block of the house is punctuated with two large brick chimneys faced with decorative arches, done in limestone or concrete. The two end wings, which run perpendicular to the main block have two chimneys, similar in treatment as those on the main roof, but smaller. Another somewhat smaller chimney is on the main roof, but set back and just east of the south chimney on the west wing.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is on the south facade of the main block, with a major, but less elaborate entrance on the north facade, on axis. Neither of these doors is used. A less elaborate entrance is at the farthest west bay of the west wing. On the north facade of the west wing is a door that was probably the service entrance during the Bliss occupancy. Several openings exist in the orangery and hyphen between the orangery and main block. The entrance to Dumbarton Oaks is on 32nd Street and the museum wings have other doors.

b. Windows: On the first floor of the south facade of the main block, there are two windows to either side of the entrance, and one window on the north end and one window on the

south end of main block where it projects beyond the wings. These tall windows, capped with masonry splayed, keystone lintels, are French doors with transoms above. The same window treatment is repeated in the second story window in the east and west wings closest to the main block, but is more elaborate as the windows have full architraves. The second story windows of the south facade of the main of the block repeat the lintel treatment of the first floor windows. The windows on the south facades of the east and west wings (with the exception of the two windows described earlier) lack lintels, are shorter and narrower, and are not French doors. All windows have masonry sills. Shutters have been removed from the south facade.

On the north facade of the main block, the first floor windows are French doors, fronted by decorative balconies and are topped by transom windows, but with splayed brick lintels, rather than the elaborate masonry lintels on the south facade. The smaller second story windows, except for the window above the entrance, have the same brick lintels. The second story window is a tall round arched window divided by a mullion into two panels of ten windows each, with half round light at the top divided by radiating mullions.

The 1929 music room has five large arched windows on its north facade and a large Palladian window on its west facade.

The east facade of the north wing has a projecting, three part window wall, with a hipped, concave, standing seam metal roof.

The Pre-Columbian wing, consisting of nine glass (and stone piers) pavilions, is a series of curved glass cylinders.

The Garden Library wing has two quite tall bow windows on its south facade.

The orangery and the hyphen connecting it to the main block consist of arcades of French doors/windows topped with round arches, with radiating mullions. Of the arched openings, only the doors are extended down to the ground.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main block roof is a low Mansard with slate shingles on the angled vertical planes. The roofs of the two wings running perpendicular to the main block are gables. The orangery roof is a raised hip with clerestory windows. The music room has a flat roof. The later structures have hip or gable roofs. The Pre-Columbian wing has saucer domes over the eight perimeter cylinders.

b. Cornice, eaves: The orangery has a parapet with balustrade and blank panels. The main block of the house has a blank frieze, with a cornice supported by dentils. Above that cornice is another blank frieze at the Mansard roof line. The circular projecting bay at the center of the north facade lacks the blank frieze below the cornice. The north-south wings have the same

cornice with dentils, but no frieze. The gable ends of the north-south wings have pediments with dentils.

c. Dormers: The roof of the south facade of the main block has five dormer windows, with the central one being wider, having narrow windows flanking the main window. The roofs of the hyphens to either side of the main block have one dormer window each. All the dormers are French windows. The dormers alternate between pediment and segmental arch. On the north facade, there are six dormers.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. First floor: A wide north-south hall (entrance hall) runs from the formal front door (south) to the less formal garden door in the bow at the rear of the house. A longer, but much narrower east-west corridor (gallery) crosses the main hall at the rear. To the left (west) of the main hall is the director's office, formerly the dining room. Opposite it is the associate director's office; this oval space is also known as the salon. The east-west corridor on the west end opens onto the support staff offices and to the museum wing of the complex. At the opposite end of the corridor, it opens onto a wooden paneled library (study), which is adjacent to the associate director's office. The corridor also opens onto the rear wing at the east end of the house, which is the Founders' Room, also known as drawing, living, or commons room. It is now a reading room. At the extreme east end of the corridor is the passage to the orangery.

The museum wing consists of garden library, entrance wing, connecting corridors, music room, Byzantine collection rooms, and Pre-Columbian wing.

b. Second floor: A large library occupys the space above the first floor main hall and flanking rooms. Secondary spaces off of the east-west corridor are offices.

c. Third floor (attic): Offices and book-stack areas.

d. Basement: Slide libraries and offices, and mechanical rooms.

2. Stairways: During the Bliss occupancy two stairs with wrought-iron balustrade were added to the east-west corridor at the east and west ends. These elaborate stairs with bird and leaf decorations balance each other. The same design is echoed in the spiral, rear stair connecting the second and third floors. These stairs in the main corridor replaced an earlier staircase along the north wall at the east end. Dumbarton Oaks archives attributes the stair rail design to Samuel Yellin.

3. Flooring: In the main block and the music room, the floors are wooden. In corridors leading to the main block from the entrance wing and in museum spaces, the floors are marble or

wood with marble blocks at the edges.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Several of the rooms have wood paneling, and the music room has a wooden ceiling with beams. The wall and ceiling finishes in other rooms appears to be plaster.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: The front door and doors into the director's and associate director's office are the most elaborate. The front door is doublepaneled, topped with an arched light. The associate director's double glass doors are recessed and flanked by a small bathroom and closet and then curved glass walls immediately before the doors. Across the entrance hall are the tall, double doors to the director's office. Those doors have a full architrave, capped by a segmental arch with carved fruit in the tympanum. The east-west corridor also has tall, wooden-paneled double doors separating the main block of the house from the more recent parts of the museum.

An elevator runs from the basement to the upper floors. An interesting feature of the elevator is that it has a two door cabin, opening on either the west or south sides, depending on the floor.

b. Windows: As noted in the exterior description, most windows are large French windows. The most notable windows are those in the music room, with a large Palladian window at the west end and a row of tall, round-arched windows along the north wall. These windows provide visual relief and contrast to the closed-in effect of the solid south wall and largely solid west wall.

6. Decorative features and trim: Description taken from the "Dumbarton Oaks, House Collection Dossier Fact Sheet", the entrance hall (main hall) and galleries (east-west corridor): "The wall paneling was added by Frederick H. Brooke in 1922-1923, as the 1924 Vernay Inventory lists the six Sheffield wall sconces (F.25-30) as being in place. The Blisses had purchased these from Arthur S. Vernay, NYC, in 1923. The paneling consists of an uninterrupted dada frieze, bordered top and bottom by molding of simple profile, and tall, vertical raised (or fielded) paneling, rectangular in shape except for those panels on the south wall which face windows on the north wall; these terminate in omega-shaped arches. The French-style casement windows on the north wall and its exhedra have scotia-molded heads interrupted by a tablet and are capped by semi-circular elliptical) pediments. The crown molding consists of a shallow bracket frieze surmounted by reduced tegulae design at the ceiling. Originally, a door from the Oval Room communicated to the Gallery just before the base of the east staircase. This door was block up in 1964 (see Oval Room dossier)." (page 2)

"Dumbarton Oaks, House Collection, Dossier Fact Sheet" description of the Director's Office: "Central to the room's design was a ca. 1780-1790 English Neo-Classical mantle of

carved yellow-veined white marble, having lateral pilaster supports carved in low relief with leaf and scroll decoration and small urns above the first molding. At the center of the lintel and set in a red marble frame is a rectangular marble relief depicting Hercules at the Crossroads, which is possibly not original to the piece. The mantle was in place at the time of the 1924 Vernay Inventory.(p. 1)

"Dumbarton Oaks, House Collection, Dossier Fact Sheet" description of the Associate Director's Office: "The *troupe l'oeil* decoration of the wall paneling was painted *en grisaille* to simulate an egg-and-dart cornice molding, pilasters with Ionic capitals supporting a plain frieze entablature, arches over the window and passageway niches and arched lunettes over the fireplace mirror and entrance doorway. The arched lunettes were each decorated with *en grisaille* paintings of three putti playing in an outdoor setting. The areas over bookcases and over the vestibule doorway were decorated with *troupe l'oeil* drapery swags. The eighteenth-century mantel has lateral chamfered supports designed as upright fluted and scrolled brackets which uphold the mantel shelf of low-arched curved, paneled and diapered relief pattern centered by an oval cartouche. The hearth opening was fitted with a modern reproduction cast iron fire back of six parts, having lateral outer panels and inter of lattice motif with acanthus leafage and lateral - inner panels of interlaced vinage forming a central oval motif. The fireback panel is designed with a classical charioteer motif of a nude male figure (Apollo?)." (page 2)

"Dumbarton Oaks, House Collection, Dossier Fact Sheet" description of the study (library): "The English Renaissance, c. 1643, oak paneling, of ca. 250 square feet and having traditional rectangular framed-panel construction, came from Sherard House, High Street, Eltham, Kent... the mantel in the Dumbarton Oaks Study, which may be period or reproduction, has measurements which match those given in a letter from Owen Grant Ltd., London (6'9" W x 8'8" H)... The ceiling is a reproduction English plaster strapwork ceiling, the plaster straps being ornamented with rinceau motifs. The flooring is of oak random-width planks." (pages 1 and 2)

"Dumbarton Oaks, House Collection, Dossier Fact Sheet" description of the Music Room: "The Blisses planned the Music Room to be essentially Renaissance in character and commissioned a reproduction sixteenth-century painted beam ceiling and a reproduction eighteenth-century 'Versailles pattern' oak parquet flooring... In addition, the Blisses acquired antique architectural fittings for the room, including two sixteenth-century Italian Verona marble arches, a French sixteenth-century chimney piece from the Chateau de Theobon, Loubes-Beernac, and two sixteenth-century marble plaques with coats-of-arms (S.27.1-2(S))." (Page 7)

"The Dumbarton Oaks, House Collection Dossier Fact Sheet" exist for other rooms such as the Founders' Room. The Dossier Fact Sheets provide a great amount of very detailed information on the key rooms and the above quotes do not even suggest the depth of information compiled by Dumbarton Oaks.

7. Hardware: The Director's Office door and the doors in the east-west corridor have the

most impressive hardware with large stays, lock, and hinges on the Director's Office door and pinnacle capped hinges on some corridor doors.

B. Mechanical equipment: A boiler room is in the basement.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Approximately 15 acres of landscaping with manicured front (south)lawn. The house is approached by a sand driveway running from a gate on R Street to a second gate closer to 32nd Street, also on R Street. The land falls off more gradually from the front of the house to R Street, but the decline on the north and east sides is quite steep.

2. Historic landscape design: Mrs. Bliss played an active role in designing with Beatrix J. Farrand and later Ruth Havey the varied and complex gardens to the east and north of the house. These gardens both incorporated and modified the existing topography.

3. Outbuildings: North of the house and along the north side of S Street are several fairly large support buildings, now used as offices and the director's house, and other buildings such as a greenhouse and storage and work buildings.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary Source: The Dumbarton Oaks House Collection and Archives is the definitive source for information on Dumbarton Oaks. It is the depository of original research on land transactions and the owners of the property; a manuscript history of the property; depository for the Bliss correspondence and other records, including correspondence with architects and dealers; architectural drawings, photographs (nineteenth and twentieth century); and masterplans and other documents generated by Harvard University in the last twenty or more years and numerous other records. As suggested by the above quotes from the "Dumbarton Oaks Dossier Fact Sheets", the various rooms and contents have been exhaustively researched and described, accompanied by comprehensive citations.

Much of the Walter Muir Whitehill monograph on Dumbarton Oaks is obviously drawn from the materials at Dumbarton Oaks's House Collection and Archives. As stated in his book, he also drew on the resources of the Virginia Historical Society for the chapter on the Beverley ownership. Whitehill deposited his papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society and Box 8 is labeled "Dumbarton Oaks", but the contents of that box have not been examined for this report.

Whitehill also used the recollections of the children of the Blounts and their photographs for his description of the house in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. A decade after Whitehill's monograph was published, a grandson of the Blounts published a family history and it appears that he included the same recollections and photographs that were made available to

Whitehill.

B. Bibliography:

Whitehill, Walter Muir, *Dumbarton Oaks:.The History of A Georgetown House and Garden; 1800-1966.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967.

Sutton, Denys, ed. "Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C." reprint of *APOLLO*, vol. CXIX, no. 266 (April 1984).

White, John Sargent. *To Keep The Declaration,* privately printed and copyrighted by John Sargent White, 1978. Has the only late nineteenth/early twentieth-century interiors and the only precisely dated early exteriors.

Ecker, Grace Dunlop. *A Portrait of Old Georgetown.* Richmond, Va.: The Dietz Press, 1951. Some of the misinformation on Dumbarton Oaks which appears in nearly every book on Georgetown or Washington, D.C., is repeated in or originated with this book.

Lockwood, Mary S. *Historic Homes in Washington: Its Noted Men and Women.* NY : Belford Co.,1889. Has a small photograph of the house which definitively shows how it looked before the Blounts bought it in 1890. Since the book was published in 1889, this photograph is the best visual evidence that the north tower and Mansard roof were done before Blount's ownership, and most likely by Linthicum, as stated by Whitehill.

Books on Georgetown and most books on Washington, D.C., include a discussion and usually a photograph of Dumbarton Oaks.

C. Early Views: Nineteenth and early twentieth-century views of Dumbarton Oaks are at the Historical Society of Washington and the D.C. Public Library (the Peabody Room at the Georgetown Branch and the Washingtoniana Collection at the Martin Luther King Branch).

D. Building permits are at the National Archives and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts has an index to permits it reviewed.

Prepared by: William Lebovich, Architectural Historian, March 1999

IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Georgetown Documentation Project was sponsored by the Commission of Fine Arts and undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) of the National Park Service. Principals involved were Charles H. Atherton, Secretary, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and E. Blaine Cliver, Chief, HABS/HAER.

The documentation was undertaken in two phases. The summer 1998 team was supervised by John P. White, FAIA, Professor of Architecture, Texas Tech University; and architecture technicians Robert C. Anderson, Boston Architectural Center; Aimee Charboneau, Tulane University; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Adam Maksay, United States/International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) architect from the Transylvania Trust. Historic research was initiated by Bryan C. Green, historian, Richmond, Virginia, during this summer. The summer 1999 team was supervised by Roger S. Miller, architect, Alexandria, Virginia, and architecture technicians David Benton, The Catholic University of America; Edward Byrdy, The Catholic University of America; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Clara Albert, US/ICOMOS architect from the Transylvania Trust. The project historian, and author of the written reports, was William Lebovich, architectural historian, Chevy Chase, Maryland. The photography was undertaken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, and James Rosenthal, photographic assistant.